



Issues & Challenges

of Contemporary Islam and Muslims



Edited by

Ahmad Sunawari Long • Siddig Ahmad • Abdull Rahman Mahmood
Nur Farhana Abd. Rahman • Wan Fariza Alyati Wan Zakaria

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DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY
FACULTY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

ISSUES & CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

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Religious Art Division	238
MOHAMMAD MEHDI MAZAHARI	
Quran and Globalization	243
MOHAMMAD REZA ARAM	
An Introduction to the Basis of Human Natural Law in Islam, With Emphasis on Shiite School of Thought	253
MOHAMMAD-JAVAD JAVID & SOMAYEHSADAT MIRILAVASANI	
Muslim Intellectual Contacts in the 18 th Century Between the Arab World and the Malay World	270
MOHAMMED HUSSAIN AHMAD	
The “Justly Balanced” Nature of Islam (Al-Wasatiyyah) and the Challenges Posed by the Islam Liberal Network Ideas in Contemporary Indonesian Society	290
MOHD KAMAL HASSAN	
Christian and Muslim Philosophers’s Apologia for Greek Philosophy	299
MOHD NASIR OMAR	
The Concept of <i>Malakah</i> in the Educational System from the Perspective of Ibnu Khaldun	306
MOHD NIZAM BIN SAHAD	
<i>Al-Munasabah</i> : Rasionaliti Islam	312
MUHAMMAD ADIB SAMSUDIN & MOHAMMAD ZAINI YAHAYA	
The Concept of Revelation in Islam:An Overview of Its Components and Constituents	335
MUHAMMAD AZIZAN SABJAN & NOOR SHAKIRAH MAT AKHIR	
Pengaruh Tasawwuf dalam Pemikiran dan Metodologi Hadith Ulama Asia Tenggara Abad Ke-19	352
MUHAMMAD MUSTAQIM MOHD ZARIF	
Religious Militancy in Pakistan and the Role of <i>Ulama</i> (Religious Scholars): An Overview	
MURAD ALI	
Regulating Assisted Reproductive Technologies in Malaysia: An Islamic Perspective	363
NORAIZA ABDUL RAHMAN	
Pengaruh Aliran Kebatinan dalam Karya Penulisan Masyarakat Islam di Negara Brunei Darussalam	368
NORARFAN ZAINAL	

Muslim Intellectual Contacts in the 18th Century Between the Arab World and the Malay World

MOHAMMED HUSSAIN AHMAD

The coming of Islam to the Malay Archipelago has long attracted the attention of modern scholars. Though it is not precisely known when Islam was first introduced to the Archipelago, it is generally accepted among historians that Islam began to flourish in the Archipelago from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries. This is based on several types of evidence: a report by the Venetian traveller Marco Polo (1254-1324) who observed that Perlak, Northern Sumatra, was already a Muslim kingdom when he visited the region on his way home from China in 1292 (Yule, 1903); the discovery of the gravestone of Sultān al-Malik as-Sālīh dated 696/1297 identified as the first Muslim ruler of Samudra in the northern coast of Sumatra (Ricklefs, 2001; Drewes, 1985; al-Attas, 1969); and finally Ibn Battuta (1304-1377), a Moroccan traveller, who during his eastern travels from 1325 to 1354, observed Islamic centres remained surrounded by unconverted kingdoms, and found that the ruler of Samudra was a follower of the Shāfi'i School of Islamic jurisprudence (Ross & Power 1929).

However, this perception and observation can still be contested. The hypothesis based on Marco Polo's observation does not necessarily prove that Islam only existed or penetrated in the thirteenth century as it is very likely that it had arrived at least a century or even centuries earlier. All his evidence can prove is that an Islamic kingdom was already established before he arrived in the region in 1292. At the same time, the conjectures that the gravestone was of 'the first Muslim ruler' can be modified. The Arabic epitaph on the gravestone only reads as follows: "*hādhā qabr al-marhūm al-maghfūr at-taqī an-nāsīh al-hasīb an-nasīb al-karīm al-'ābid al-fātih al-mulaqqab bi-Sultān [al-]malik as-Sālīh* [this is the grave of him to whom God may grant mercy and forgiveness, the pious, the counsel for righteousness, the noble in rank and ancestry, the magnanimous, the devout in worship, the conqueror, known as Sultān [al-]Malik as-Sālīh]". (Fatimi 1963; Baloch 1980). This by itself does not confirm that he was the first; only that he is the *first known* Muslim ruler.

In addition, according to al-Fādānī (1983a), the *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* collection of authentic *Hadīths*, the most famous of the six canonical books on the Prophetic Traditions, was first brought from *al-Haramayn* (the two sanctuaries, Mecca and Medina) and introduced to the Island of Java in 671/1272 by Sharīf Hidāyat Allāh b. Ahmad Jalāl Shāh b. 'Abd Allāh Khān. He was reported to have migrated from *al-Haramayn* and died in Java, being later buried at Gunung Jati in Cirebon.

This strongly implies that Islam must have been established in some parts of the Archipelago, namely Java, prior to these dates, as there were already devout Muslims who strived to study the basics of the new religion to such extent that they were already in a stage qualified to acquire an advanced knowledge of it. It can also be observed that what al-Fādānī reports shows that Islam has already circulated within the Archipelago before the Western traveler's observation were recorded.

Another reason for the confusion among Western scholars is their observation that the propagators of Islam in the Archipelago seemingly arrived from India. They did not comprehend that in the olden days it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the sailing vessels to sail directly from Hadramawt, Yemen, to the Archipelago, without stopping at the coastal cities of India thence to Southeast Asia. If we observe that the

majority of Muslims in India are adherents of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, while the Muslims of Southeast Asia adhere to the Shāfi'yyah school, the *madhhab* of the *Ashrāf* of Hadramawt. (al-'Aydarūs, n.d.). This seems to indicate strong evidence that the *Ashrāf*, whether those who have settled down in India or came from Hadramawt through the ports of India, were in fact the early propagators of Islam to the Archipelago. Hence, the generally accepted conjecture that Islam only flourished in the Archipelago from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries still leaves room for further discussion and should be tackled seriously from a new perspective.

The Links between 'Ulama' from the Archipelago and the Arab World

Similarly as was the case in the introduction of Islam to the region, it is also not clear as to when contacts between the Malay Archipelago and the Arab world were first established. Apparently the people of the Archipelago did not merely receive Islam, but also reacted to it and attempted to search out every aspect of its teachings for themselves. They went to the central lands of Islam and then returned back to their homeland to teach their own people. This is apparent from the travels of some known figures in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as Hamzah al-Fansūrī (d. ca 1016/1607), though his dates of travel are unknown, although perhaps it was during the second half of the sixteenth century that he was reported to have visited Barus (northwestern coast of Sumatra), Kedah, Pahang, Bantam and Kudus in Java, Siam, Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and Baghdad. Shams ad-Dīn as-Sumatrānī (d. 1040/1630), who, from his eloquent Arabic works, we can conclude that most likely he too must have travelled to centres of traditional Islamic learning, especially to *al-Haramayn*, and later 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf as-Sinkīlī who spent about nineteen years studying in ad-Dawḥah (Doha, Qatar), al-Mokha (Mocha), Zabīd, Bayt al-Faqīh (all these three cities in Yemen), Mecca, Medina and Jeddah probably from 1052/1642 until 1072/1661 when he finally returned to Aceh. (as-Sinkīlī, n.d.; Winstedt 1969; al-Attas 1963; Ito 1978; Johns 1955, 1981, 1984; Azra 2004).

Furthermore, there is always the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) which constitutes the fifth Pillar of Islam, that forms the framework of Islamic life. All Muslims who are physically and financially able are obligated to perform the *Hajj* at least once in a lifetime. Though, again, there are no records or evidence to when, how, or who was the first to embark from the Archipelago to perform the *Hajj*, this religious obligation must certainly have inspired some, if not many to journey to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, hence establishing contacts between the Malay Archipelago and these Islamic centres.

The continuous trade between the Mughal Empire and the Empires of Islamic West Asia, the Malay Archipelago and China, without doubt, must have assisted and contributed the development of Islam, as the established trade routes were the arteries for the expanding Muslim community in the Archipelago. Though it remains a question and a mere conjecture whether the Arabs settled to form resident trading communities in the Archipelago as they did elsewhere, it is probable that they did settle down in at least some of the trading ports of Southeast Asia. Indeed, if we take into account that the Arab colonies were already firmly established in Chinese ports particularly Canton (Khan-fu) by the middle of the eighth century and by the middle of the ninth when full descriptions of them can be observed from Arabic sources, it is of tolerable certainty that they must have also established their commercial settlements on some of the islands of the Archipelago. (Hourani 1963; Meilink-Roelofs 1970; Tibbetts 1957; Di Meglio 1970).

Unfortunately the history of Islam in the Archipelago in the early centuries is difficult to study due to the serious shortage of primary sources originating from the Archipelago itself for the study of Islam in this region. While for the later periods not all materials have been examined.

However, if we analyse from a different perspective, none of the well surviving primary sources from any Islamic centres in the Arab world or from any Islamic kingdom in India have ever provided us with any accounts related to the travels or contacts of *Jāwī* scholars or students with these centres to the west of the Archipelago. Arabic literatures and works on Islamic history such as Ibn Jarīr at-Tabarī's (d. 310/923) *Tārīkh at-Tabarī*, as-Sam'ānī's (d. 562/1166) *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, Ibn 'Asāqir's (d. 571/1175) *Tārīkh Dimashq*, Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229) *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, an-Nawawī's (d. 676/1278) *Tahdhīb al-Asmā' wa 'l-Lugāt*, Ibn Khallikān's (d. 679/1281) *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, adh-Dhahabī's (d. 748/1348) *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* and his *Tārīkh al-Islām al-Kabīr*, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī's (d. 852/1448) *ad-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mī'ah ath-Thāminah*, and as-Suyutī's (d. 911/1505) *Husn al-Muhadarah*, to name a few, do not indicate any records of *Jāwī* students and their travels. This perhaps shows that the *Jāwī* did not travel to the centres of Islamic learning to acquire knowledge in the early period, or at least it indicates that they were not known to the Arab scholars in these centres during that time.

17th Century Intellectual Contacts

It was not until the late sixteenth century as Johns (1978) points out, that *Jāwī* contributors to the spread of Islamic teachings can be observed, especially in the port city of Aceh. Though, he suggested, that it is more than likely that there were many unrecorded travels and unknown scholars who went far afield in the quest for a deeper knowledge of the traditions of Islam.

Nevertheless, from the current available evidence, it is highly plausible if we conclude that from the early stage of the rise of Islam up to the fifteenth century, the people from the Archipelago had to rely heavily on the Arab and Indian Muslim travellers to learn every aspect of the Islamic teachings as there is no such record of their travel either from the Archipelago itself, or, especially the *al-Haramayn* to prove early scholarship of the *Jāwī* students in the early period.

In fact, the mention of *Jāwī* students, known in the Arab world as '*AsHāb al-Jāwiyyīn*' (fellow *Jāwī* students) or '*Jamā'at min 'l-Jāwiyyīn*' (community of *Jāwī* students) as well as their place of origin, '*Bilād al-Jāwah*' (the Malay world) in Arabic sources and works only began to make their appearance in the early seventeenth century. The extensive contacts between *Jāwī* students and their teachers in the Arab world, particularly *al-Haramayn* during this time is probably best reflected in several works of the Medinian scholar Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (1025-1101/1616-90) who not only mentioned the *Jāwī* community and *Bilād al-Jāwah* in his writings, but also paid special attention to the religious issues arising back in the Archipelago. He is also reported to have written a treatise specifically for his *Jāwī* students, entitled *al-Jawābāt al-Gharāwiyyah 'an 'l-Masā'il al-Jāwiyyah al-Jahriyyah*. (al-Baghdādī, n.d., 1951; al-Murādī 1997; al-Ahdal 1979).

Another renowned Meccan scholar who was also a *qāDī* (judge) of the holy city, Tāj ad-Dīn b. Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm (d. 1066/1655) better known as Ibn Ya'qūb also wrote a work in order to meet the religious needs of his *Jāwī* students. His work entitled *al-Jāddat al-Qawīmah ilā Tahqīq Mas'alat al-Wujūd wa-Ta'alluq al-Qudrat al-Qadīmah fī 'l-*

Jawāb 'an 'l-As'ilat al-Wāridah min Jāwah, was probably to clarify the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* (Oneness of Being) that has been misconceived and debated in the Archipelago. (al-Baghdādī, n.d., 1951; Kahhālāh 1957). Azra (2004) asserts that this work was probably written upon the request of 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf al-Jāwī as-Sinkilī (1024-1105/1615-1693) as Ibn Ya'qūb was included among the scholars who came in contact with him in Mecca.

According to Johns (1978), in the seventeenth century 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf as-Sinkilī was in a much better position historically, as it is possible to document his relationship with two of his teachers in Medina. Not only their names: Ahmad al-Qushāshī (991-1071/1538-1661) and the already mentioned Kurdish born Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī who later resided and died in Medina, are known, but also something of their works and personalities. Of them, as Johns argues, the greater, although the lesser known, was Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, a key figure in the network of teachers in the seventeenth century as well as an authority on the earlier Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) tradition. At the request of a Jāwī student, probably 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf as-Sinkilī himself, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī wrote one of his most important single works, a commentary entitled *Ithāf adh-Dhaki bi-Sharh at-Tuhfat al-Mursalāh ilā Rūh an-Nabī* on *at-Tuhfat al-Mursalāh* by an Indian author, Muhammad b. Fadl Allāh al-Hindī al-Burhānpūrī (d. 1029/1620). (Johns 1965; al-Kūrānī, n.d.a).

Though Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī is a neglected author, as Johns (1965) emphasised, he is of real importance for the understanding of Islam as it took root in Southeast Asia, and was the prime source of the intellectual life of Aceh in the seventeenth century. The influence of al-Kūrānī's personality, his learning and his special kind of piety is evident in his pupil and later colleague 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf as-Sinkilī. In fact, this picture of master and pupil has much wider implications; it is after all the first recorded example of such relationship between a Jāwī scholar – in this case an Achenese – and a West Asian Muslim scholar.

Furthermore, of equal significance is the fact that Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī wrote one of his most important works, the *Ithāf adh-Dhaki*, with a direct concern for the religious problems in Aceh, and out of a concern for one particular problem, addressing himself to the Muslim world as a whole. Another interesting fact is the example of a religious treatise (*at-Tuhfat al-Mursalāh*), written in Arabic in India and completed in 999/1590 and sent to Aceh, becoming known in the Arabic centres of Islamic learning because of its popularity in Aceh and was used in the bitter quarrel from 1047/1637 onwards between Nūr ad-Dīn ar-Rānirī and the follower of Shams ad-Dīn as-Sumatrānī; the situation that prompted Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī to write his commentary on it.

The strong scholarly connections between the 'ulamā' of Arabia and the Jāwī community in the seventeenth century, as mentioned earlier, is not only obvious from the attention they received during their sojourn in *al-Haramayn*, particularly from Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, but it is also clear that this also continued when these students eventually completed their studies and travelled back to their homeland. This continued attention, especially to religious issues arising back in the Archipelago, can be seen clearly reflected in an untitled treatise by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (n.d.b) which begins: "*faqad warada su'āl min ba'D Jazā'ir Jāwah Sanat 1089 Hijriyah*" written in response to questions posed and sent to him from the Archipelago in 1089/1678. I am able to confirm that this treatise is entitled *al-Maslak al-Jalī fī Hukm Shath al-Walī* from a preface by 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1730) to a manuscript copy of this work. He states that *al-Maslak al-Jalī* was written by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī in response to a question posed to him from Jāwah and that an-Nābulusī himself later wrote an

exposition to address the same issue entitled *Sharh Risālat al-Maslak al-Jalī fī Hukm Shath al-Walī* which he completed on Friday, 13th Sha`bān 1139/5th April 1727. In this regard he says "... wajadtu risālah ismuhā al-Maslak al-Jalī fī Hukm Shath al-Walī li `sh-Shaykh al-Imām al-`Allāmah al-`Umdah al-Muhaqqiq al-Mudaqqiq al-Fahhāmah al-Munlā Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī al-Madanī ... ajāba bi-hā `an su`āl warada `alayhi min ba`D Jazā`ir Jāwah min aqsā Bilād al-Hind fī sanat sittin wa-thamānīn wa-alf hās iluhu ayyad Allāh Ta`āla al-`ulamā` ahl al-tahqīq wa-hadā bi-him at-Tālibīn sawā` at-Tarīq ...". (an-Nābulusī, n.d.; Mach 1977).

In addition, it is now possible to argue on the basis of fresh evidence that the anonymous scholar mentioned in this treatise, described as 'some visiting scholars to Jāwah who were highly praised for their knowledge of exoteric and esoteric sciences' (*ba`d al-`ulamā` al-wāridīn ilaiha min-man yuthnā `alaihi biannahu `ālim bi `l-`ilm az-zāhir wa `l-bātin*) to be non other than Nūr ad-Dīn ar-Rānīrī. It is evident from at least three of his works that he mentioned the exact issue pertaining to the notorious ecstatic utterances or the sweeping statements (*shatahāt*) of Sūfis which were later answered by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī. (ar-Rānīrī, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c). It is worthwhile mentioning that the questions about the *shatahāt* posted from the Archipelago were perhaps sent by `Abd ar-Ra`ūf as-Sinkīlī himself. As already demonstrated earlier, he enjoyed a special teacher-student relationship with Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, and was probably his closest Jāwī disciple. Furthermore, as-Sinkīlī's travels to the Arab world were between 1052/1642 and 1072/1661; hence, he was back in the Archipelago by the time the question was posed and sent in 1089/1678.

Recently, a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the network connecting the Jāwī `ulamā` and the centres of Islamic learning in Arabia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was undertaken by Azra (2004). His work, based mostly on his PhD dissertation, successfully sketches and demonstrates the intensive scholarly connections, proving that the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries constituted one of the most dynamic periods in the socio-intellectual history of Islam, particularly pertaining to the Islamic history of Southeast Asia.

For the seventeenth century, Azra lists three major Jāwī scholars in historical sequence. Nūr ad-Dīn Muhammad b. `Ali b. Hasanjī al-Humayd ash-Shāfi`ī al-Ash`arī al-`Aydarūs ar-Rānīrī (d. 1068/1658), though born in Rānīr (modern Randir), India, he is generally regarded as a Jāwī `ālim, probably of Arab origin, rather than Indian or Arab, as he wrote eloquently both in Malay and Arabic. The second scholar in the seventeenth century whom Azra studied was `Abd ar-Ra`ūf b. `Alī al-Jāwī al-Fansūrī as-Sinkīlī, a Malay of Fansūr, Sinkil (modern Singkel), on the south-western coastal region of Aceh. `Abd ar-Ra`ūf as-Sinkīlī as indicated previously, has been studied by Johns who managed to trace his connections with the Arab scholars of his period. Finally the third Jāwī scholar in the seventeenth century is Muhammad Yūsuf b. `Abd Allāh Abū al-Mahāsīn at-Tāj al-Khalwātī al-Maqassārī (1037-1111/1627-99). Al-Maqassārī, as he tells of himself was a student of al-Rānīrī but probably studied with him in India as the latter had left for Rānīr when the former departed from Makassar, hence it is unlikely that they met in Aceh. As al-Maqassārī's period of study in Mecca and Medina coincided with that of as-Sinkīlī, therefore it can be expected that he must have studied with the same teachers as the latter. (Azra 2004, 52-108).

18th Century Intellectual Contacts

The intensive scholarly connections between *Jāwī* students and Arab scholars in the seventeenth century continued to flourish during the following centuries. In the eighteenth century, a leading *al-Haramayn* scholar who was a *Sūfī* and the *muftī* of Medina, Muhammad b. Sulaymān al-Kurdī also wrote a treatise entitled *al-Durrat al-Bahiyyah fī Jawāb al-As'ilat al-Jāwiyyah*, specifically to provide answers to questions posed by his *Jāwī* students. (al-Murādī, 1997; al-Baghdādī, n.d., 1951). Among his *Jāwī* students, as we will see later, was 'Abd as-Samadal-Falimbānī.

Azra gave particular attention to the three key seventeenth century figures mentioned above, as each of them was studied individually in a separate chapter to demonstrate their links with the *'ulamā'* of the Arab world. By contrast, the scholars of the eighteenth century only receive partial attention as all of them were grouped and studied in only one chapter. These include scholars such as Muhammad Arshad b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd ar-Rahmān al-Banjārī (1122-1227/1710-1812), Muhammad Nafīs b. Idrīs b. al-Husayn al-Banjārī (1148-1245/1735-1829), 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī and Dāwūd b. 'Abd Allāh b. Idrīs al-Fatānī (1176-1263/1763-1846). (Azra 2004, 109-126). Despite having no direct teacher-student connections with al-Rānīrī, as-Sinkīlī or al-Maqassārī, the teachers of all these scholars' from the Arab centres of Islamic learning especially in Mecca, Medina, Egypt, Yemen, Damascus, etc., were prominent scholars in the eighteenth century who had direct connections to the earlier scholars of these centres.

It remains doubtful whether the majority of the works by the Arab scholars mentioned above are available today for research. Unfortunately, I have found no trace of them, despite my attempts. However, the fact that at least four works were devoted to questions by *Jāwī* students by the leading *'ulamā'* of *al-Haramayn* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries substantiate the hypothesis that the extensive contacts and the intense intellectual discourse between *Jāwī* students and scholars of the centres of traditional Islamic learning were established and intensified greatly during this period.

It is important to comprehend that the link between the Malay Archipelago and the Arab world, especially Mecca as a centre of Islamic learning for centuries, was an ongoing and continuous process that developed further in the nineteenth century. This is evident from the numerous *Jāwī 'ulamā'* who became prominent teachers and formed an integral part of the scholarly network in this period, especially in Mecca. ('Abd al-Jabbār 1982; al-Bakrī, 2008; al-Hadrāwī 1996). The close teacher-student bonds of the *Jāwī* students who studied with numerous Arab scholars of Mecca was evident, as they were asking for *fatwās* (Islamic legal opinions) on religious issues arising back in their homeland. For instance, even in the late nineteenth century, 'Abd as-Salām b. Idrīs al-Jāwī al-Ashī in 1305/1887 translated into Malay a collection of *fatwās* pertaining to religious issues back in the Malay Archipelago entitled *Muhimmāt an-Nafā'is fī Bayān As'ilat al-Hādith*, originally issued by three renowned scholars of Mecca, Ahmad Zaynī Dahlān (d. 1304/1886), the Meccan Yemeni Muhammad Sa'īd Bā-Busayl (1249-1330/1833-1912), both *Shāfi'ī muftīs* in Mecca consecutively, and Muhammad b. Sulaymān Hasab Allāh (d. 1335/1916). (al-Ashī 1892).

Therefore, studying these *Jāwī* scholars individually and their works which up to the present have not been sufficiently studied will give us a better and a clearer picture of their scholarly connections and contributions to the development of Islam in the Archipelago, and hence, an enhanced understanding of the religious and cultural history of Southeast Asia.

The Eighteenth Century 'Ulamā'

In addition to the eighteenth century 'ulamā' mentioned above by Azra, Drewes (1977) also provides a list of 'ulamā' and authors of Palembang origin, eleven of them to be exact, together with their known works. This include Shihāb ad-Dīn b. 'Abd Allāh Muhammad who authored *Kitāb 'Aqīdat al-Bayān*, a short and simple survey of the twenty attributes of God (*sifat dua puluh*) and an exposition of the meaning of the short creed '*naḥī ithbāt*' or the Negation and the Affirmation; a *Risālah* dealing with the *kalimat ash-shahādah* (statement of testimony) in a mystical sense, intended to shield people from both manifest and hidden polytheism (*shirk jalī* and *shirk khafī*); and a Malay translation of an Arabic commentary on the well-known *Jawharat at-Tawhīd* by Ibrāhīm al-Laḡānī (d. 1041/1631) which he completed in 1163/1750. Shihāb ad-Dīn's son, Muhammad Muhyī ad-Dīn who translated into Malay an Arabic 'Life of Muhammad as-Sammān' entitled *Hikayat Shaikh Muhammad Samman*, completed in 1196/1781. Kemas Fakhr ad-Dīn who has four works attributed to him, among them *Kitāb Mukhtasar*, a Malay translation of the revered Damascene saint, Walī Raslān ad-Dimashqī's (d. 541/1146) *Risālah fī 't-Tawhīd*, with additions borrowed from the commentaries by the prolific Egyptian Qādī, Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā al-Ansārī (d. 926/1520) and the eighteenth century Damascene Sūfī and 'ālim, 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulusī; and *Khawāss al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, dealing with the eminent qualities of the chapters and verses of the Qur'ān, began in 1183/1769 and completed in 1184/1170.

Muhammad b. Ahmad Kemas Badr ad-Dīn (1132-77/1719-63) who under the patronage of Sultān Mahmūd Badr ad-Dīn (r. 1724-57) of Palembang wrote his *Nafahāt ar-Rahmān fī Manāqib Ustādhinā al-A'zam as-Sammān*, on virtues (*manāqib*) and miracles (*karāmat*) of the renowned eighteenth century Sūfī saint (*walī*) in Medina, Shaykh Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm as-Sammān (d. 1189/1775); and *Bahr al-'Ajā'ib*, which deals with calculations for the prediction of future events, translated from the Arabic *Bahr al-Wuqūf fī 'Ilm at-Tawfiq wa 'l-Hurūf* of 'Abd ar-Rahmān al-Bistāmī (d. 858/1454). Probably the most prominent among those included in this list was 'Abd as-Samadal-Falimbānī himself, with seven works credited to him (including *Tuhfat ar-Rāghibīn*, which was erroneously attributed by Drewes to him). (Drewes 1977, 219-229).

It is worth mentioning that based on my investigation on Muhammad Kemas's *Nafahāt ar-Rahmān*, the account of 'his year of birth' 1132/1719 and 'his year of death' 1177/1763 given by Ronkel (1909) and Winstedt (1969) cannot possibly be accepted. What can be deduced from this work is that Muhammad Kemas himself was not a direct student of as-Sammān as he addressed him as '*shaykh mashyāyikhinā*' (teacher of our teachers); rather he was a student of as-Sammān's students such as his own father, Ahmad Kemas al-Falimbānī, Siddīq b. 'Umar Khān al-Madanī, 'Abd ar-Rahmān b. 'Abd al-Azīz al-Maghribī, and as-Sammān's own son, 'Abd al-Karīm. (Kemas, n.d.). If Muhammad Kemas was born in 1132/1719, it seems strange that he did not accompany his father to study directly with as-Sammān, who himself was born in 1130/1717, especially knowing that his father Ahmad Kemas was a devoted disciple of as-Sammān who venerated his teacher highly. Furthermore, in his *Nafahāt ar-Rahmān*, the author devoted a chapter to numerous *karāmats* of as-Sammān reported by his students after his death (1189/1775). It should be understood that in the Sūfī's tradition, the *karāmat* of a *walī* does not only occur during his life but continues even after his death. Therefore, if Muhammad Kemas died in 1177/1763, it is impossible for him to write this chapter as as-Sammān was still alive at that time. It is also unlikely that as-Sammān's *manāqib* could have been written in Palembang before 1763 as he

was still alive and as a rule, such works are not compiled until the venerated *Sūfī* scholar had passed away.

Undoubtedly from the list of Palembang's '*ulamā'*', it indicates that it was not until the eighteenth century that '*ulamā'*' from South Sumatra began to make their appearance and that Palembang began to play an important role in the Islamization process in the Archipelago, eventually superseding Aceh as the new centre for Islamic learning. Similar to the case of Aceh in the seventeenth century, it was largely due to the patronage of the Sultān of Palembang in the eighteenth century that most of its '*ulamā'*' began to flourish during this period and numerous students of Palembang origin were able to make their appearance in the centres of Islamic learning, especially in *al-Haramayn*, including 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī himself.

Apart from the known '*ulamā'*' of Palembang and their works whom Drewes have listed, there are further '*ulamā'*' that are not known to modern studies as their names have never appeared in these works. This can be seen for instance of names such as 'Āqib al-Falimbānī al-Madanī, his brother, Sālih al-Falimbānī, their father, Hasan ad-Dīn al-Falimbānī, their grandfather, Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Falimbānī (d. 1128/1715 in Mecca), Mahmūd b. Kinān al-Falimbānī and others. (al-Fādānī 1981a, 1987a, 1986a, 1988d). From their teacher-student links with 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī, we can more precisely conclude that most of them lived or at least were alive in the eighteenth century. Despite the large number of Palembang '*ulamā'*' that were contemporaneous to 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī, without doubt, as Johns (1984) correctly points out, it was 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī who transcended them in fame and gained much more than just local importance, spending most of his intellectual life and writing career in Mecca itself.

'Abd as-Samad al-Jawī al-Falimbānī

Scant materials exist in Arabic and Malay concerning 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī's life and personality. Existing studies of sources known to scholars tell us that al-Falimbānī was a scholar from Palembang, South Sumatra, who went to study in Mecca and Medina in the second half of the eighteenth century, and that his fields of study as evident from his few known works were Islamic Theology (*Usūl ad-dīn*), Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and finally, Sūfism (*Tasawwuf*) (Voorhoeve 1960; Ronkel 1909, 1913; Winstedt 1969; El-Muhammady 1972, 1982; Drewes 1976, 1977; Chambert-Loir 1985; Johns 1984; Quzwain 1986, 2003; Azra 1994, 2004; Abdullah 1983, 1996, 1998, 2002). However, it is possible to identify many of his own works that have not been utilised by modern scholars. These include mainly unpublished manuscripts and a few of his own published works. As a result of my examination of these manuscripts, in addition to his published works, fresh details of 'Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī's life and his role as a scholar and *Sūfī* are brought to light and can now assist in reconstructing a biographical sketch of him.

Al-Falimbānī is better known to students of Southeast Asian history as Shaykh 'Abd as-Samad al-Jāwī al-Falimbānī (ca. 1132-1254/1719-1839). As his *nisbah* (ascription) indicates, he hailed from the Palembang region in South Sumatra, the second largest island of the modern Republic of Indonesia.¹ Whereas al-Jāwī attached to his name indicates that he came from the Malay Archipelago.²

Though he originated from Palembang, according to Muhammad (1928), he had a strong link with Kedah. The traditional account of al-Falimbānī's early life described that it was 'Abd al-Jalīl the *muftī* of Kedah who sent both 'Abd as-Samad (supposedly

his son in Palembang) and `Abd al-Qādir (his son in Kedah) to Mecca. After years of learning in the Arab world, `Abd as-Samad was later well-known as `Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī, whereas `Abd al-Qādir returned to Kedah and was later appointed as the *muftī*, succeeding his father.

However, al-Falimbānī's pedigree remains obscure up to the present day. This is certainly due to the fact that al-Falimbānī in his own works is only described as `Abd as-Samad al-Jāwī al-Falimbānī without his father's name. Hence different names have been associated with his father, namely `Abd Allāh, Faqīh Husayn, `Abd al-Jalīl, and `Abd ar-Rahmān (Voorhoeve 1960; Abdullah 1996, 1998; Muhammad 1928; Quzwain 2003; Azra 2004).

Through recent comprehensive investigation based on several new evidence, I am convinced that `Abd ar-Rahmān is indeed al-Falimbānī's father as he himself uses and gives his full name as `Abd as-Samad b. `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Jāwī al-Falimbānī at least in three of his works. These include his *Zahrat al-Murīd fī Bayān Kalimat at-Tawhīd*, a manuscript copy of his *al-Urwat al-Wuthqā wa-Silsilat al-Walī al-Atqā*, and finally in a manuscript copy of his *Zād al-Muttaqīn fī Tawhīd Rabb al-Ālamīn*. (al-Falimbānī 1912, n.d.). As al-Falimbānī himself provides his father's name as `Abd ar-Rahmān in these three works, there is no reason to doubt this ascription.

In addition, there is strong supporting external evidence that `Abd ar-Rahmān was indeed al-Falimbānī's father as this was clearly mentioned by one of his close disciples, Wajīh ad-Dīn `Abd ar-Rahmān b. Sulaymān b. Yahyā al-Ahdal (1179-1250/1766-1835) the *muftī* of Zabīd, Yemen. In fact al-Ahdal was among al-Falimbānī's last students in Zabīd where he taught in the year 1206/1791. Al-Ahdal obviously considered al-Falimbānī as one of his most important teachers since he included his biographical account in his *thabat, an-Nafas al-Yamānī*, a compilation of his teachers and some of their biographical accounts. Among his teachers mentioned in this work whom al-Ahdal terms '*al-wāfidīn ilā madīnat Zabīd*' (those who were visiting scholars in Zabīd) includes "our Shaykh *al-allāmah* (the great scholar), *al-walī* (the saint), *al-fahhāmah* (the astute), *at-taqī* (the pious), *wajīh al-Islām* (notable of Islam), `Abd as-Samad b. `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Jāwī who arrived at the city of Zabīd in the year 1206/1791." (al-Ahdal 1979). This is indeed very concrete evidence since al-Ahdal himself met and studied with al-Falimbānī and later recorded his biography in his book.

In fact, al-Falimbānī was the first known *Jāwī* scholar to have a biographical notice recorded in Arabic works and al-Ahdal's work is also the first ever known Arabic source to provide us with a biographical notice of a *Jāwī* scholar active in Yemen. (al-Ahdal 1979; al-Qannūjī 2003; al-Habshī 1899; al-Baytār 1993; Zabārah 1988; al-Kattānī 1932; Kahhālāh 1957). Without doubt this definitely reflects al-Falimbānī's esteemed position in his teaching career; not only was he the only *Jāwī* scholar among his compatriots to have earned this highly revered status, but also the significant notice by `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Ahdal who himself was a *muftī* of Zabīd clearly indicates that he was one of his most important teachers as he was chosen among hundreds of other '*ulamā'*' who lived during that time to be included in his work.

Furthermore, all the *isnāds* of al-Falimbānī in the writings of the modern Indonesian traditionalist Islamic scholar, Shaykh Yāsīn al-Fādānī (1335-1410/1916-90), clearly points out that `Abd ar-Rahmān was his father's name, which corroborates al-Ahdal's notice. (al-Fādānī 1981a, 1983a, 1987a, 1988d; al-Falimbānī 1987, 1988; al-Tarmasī 1987). Similarly, this conclusion can also be seen in the *isnād* works of other scholars of Mecca. For instance, `Abd al-Hamīd Quds al-Jāwī al-Makkī (1280-

1334/1863-1915) in his *isnād* of the *al-Khalwatiyyah as-Sammāniyyah Sūfī* Order points out that he received membership of this Order from his three teachers, `Umar, and his brother Bakrī, both sons of Muhammad Shattā ad-Dimyātī, and from Husayn b. Muhammad al-Habshī, all of them in turn received it from `Aydārūs b. `Umar al-Habshī (1237-1314/1831-96). `Aydārūs al-Habshī in his *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt al-Jawhariyyah* in turn relates that he obtained his membership of this Order via several teachers, all of whom received it from `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Ahdal, who received it from `Abd as-Samad b. `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Jāwī al-Falimbānī, who in turn received it directly from the founder of the *al-Khalwatiyyah as-Sammāniyyah* Order, Muhammad as-Sammān. (Quds 1905; al-Habshī 1899). This strongly corroborates that all the *isnāds* recorded by earlier scholars, accord with the writings of al-Fādānī. At the same time, this also highlights `Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī's esteemed position in the *Sūfī Silsilah* of the eighteenth century in the Arab world.

In addition, the obscurity of al-Falimbānī's pedigree can now be clarified as al-Fādānī provides us with a crucial piece of information. According to al-Fādānī (1981a, 1983a, 1988d, 1989, 1990, n.d.) who himself was a renowned *muhaddith* of Jāwī origin in Mecca, in his *isnāds* linking him to al-Falimbānī, not only did he mention `Abd as-Samad's name but also provides his full lineage as "Shaykh `Abd as-Samad b. `Abd ar-Rahmān b. `Abd al-Jalīl al-Falimbānī". Therefore, if we accept this piece of evidence, it is obvious that `Abd al-Jalīl, the supposed father of al-Falimbānī was actually his grandfather and not his father.

Thus, if we accept the ancestry of `Abd al-Jalīl from the traditional account of al-Falimbānī in *Tawārīkh Silsilah* to be accurate, we can give the genealogy of al-Falimbānī as `Abd as-Samad b. `Abd ar-Rahmān b. `Abd al-Jalīl b. `Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ahmad al-Mahdānī, evidently showing that he was a descendant of Arab progenitors who originated from San`ā', Yemen. (Muhammad 1928).³

al-Falimbānī's Intellectual Connections

There is no clear account available on `Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī's education and travels in his early years in the Archipelago. However, as his grandfather `Abd al-Jalīl was himself a religious teacher, who was later appointed as the *muftī* of Kedah, it is highly probable that he himself instructed and taught al-Falimbānī rudimentary religious knowledge when he must have been brought from Palembang to Kedah to live with him. It is also likely that al-Falimbānī must have also studied at *pondok* (local traditional Islamic learning institutions) apart from studying with his grandfather `Abd al-Jalīl to acquire the basic Islamic knowledge before pursuing his studies further in the Islamic learning centres in the Arab world.

Unfortunately, there is also no direct account available on his travels in the Arab world during his early scholarship life. The only account that relates to his early travel to the Islamic learning centres was from the already mentioned *Tawārīkh Silsilah*. According to Muhammad (1928), it was `Abd al-Jalīl, the *muftī* of Kedah who dispatched him and his half brother `Abd al-Qādir to study in Mecca, Arabia. Probably, `Abd al-Jalīl sends them both to Mecca after completing their elementary Islamic religious education in the Archipelago. However, no dates or any further information on this is supplied in this source.

By critically examining the list of al-Falimbānī's known teachers as mentioned by various sources, based on the year of death and domicile of these teachers and other contemporary scholars with whom he came into contact, plus the dates he generally provides on completing his works, I was able to deduce his approximate date of travels

and sojourns in the Arab world as well as the names of various Islamic learning centres he visited to study in or teach.⁴

Among his earliest teachers in Arabia was the Yemeni Shāfi'i *muftī* of Zabīd, Yahyā b. `Umar Maqbūl al-Ahdal (1073-1147/1662-1734), the grandfather of the earlier mentioned `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Ahdal. (al-Fādānī 1981a, 1988d; at-Tarmasī, 1987). From the domicile of Yahyā al-Ahdal, not only do we learn that al-Falimbānī travelled to Zabīd to study with him, but we can also deduce that he was already in Zabīd, at the latest by the year 1147/1734, before al-Ahdal's death. Yahyā was evidently an important scholar in the distinguished al-Ahdal family who was an expert and a leading scholar in virtually every aspect of Islamic sciences, who grasped both the *mantūq* (external meaning) and *mafhum* (implied meaning) of these sciences. However, it was in *Hadīth* and its sciences that Yahyā al-Ahdal became most outstanding, thus he was called the *Hāfiz al-`asr* (the most reliable specialist of *Hadīth* of the age) and *muhaddith al-iqlīm* (the *muhaddith* of Yemen). (al-Ahdal 1979; al-Qannūjī 1999).

During his visit to Mecca to perform the *Hajj* in 1106/1695, Yahyā al-Ahdal took the opportunity to study with the *`ulamā'* of *al-Haramayn*. They include among others, `Abd Allāh al-Basrī (1049-1134/1639-1722), Ahmad an-Nakhli (1040-1130/1630-1717), Hasan al-Ujaymī (1049-1113/1639-1701), and Ahmad at-Tanīlī al-Madanī. (al-Ahdal 1979; al-Habshi 1970; Zabarah 1985). It is worth noting that these *al-Haramayn* scholars were students of leading scholars of the early seventeenth century, including the Egyptian *muhaddith* Muhammad b. `Alā' ad-Dīn al-Bābilī (1000-77/1591-1666), the two prominent Maghribī scholars, `Isā al-Ja'farī ath-Tha'ālibī (1020-80/1611-69) and Muhammad b. Sulaymān ar-Raddānī (1037-94/1626-83), and the two renowned *`ālim* and *Sūfī* of Medina, Ahmad al-Qushāshī, and his disciple who later became his *khalīfah*, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī. (Azra 2004).

Another teacher of al-Falimbānī in Zabīd was Yahyā al-Ahdal's maternal nephew and student, Ahmad Sharīf Maqbūl al-Ahdal (1109-63/1697-1749). From known biographical details, Ahmad al-Ahdal was also an erudite scholar of Zabīd who inherited his uncle's knowledge and assumed his teaching activity after his death. Thus it is very likely that al-Falimbānī studied with him after Yahyā al-Ahdal's death from 1147/1734 onwards and perhaps stayed with him till the late 1150s/1740s. This is highly probable if we take into account the numerous Islamic religious disciplines that al-Falimbānī studied with him, including *fiqh*, *Hadīth*, *tafsīr* (exegesis of Qur'ānic verses), sciences of *Hadīth*, *Tawhīd*, *us ūl al-fiqh* (Principles of Islamic jurisprudence), *qawā'id al-fiqh* (Maxims of Jurisprudence), *nahw* and *sarf* (grammar and syntax). (al-Fādānī, 1981a, 1988d).

It is evident that during his scholarship in Yemen, al-Falimbānī was not only able to establish a scholarly connection but later also forged a strong teacher-student nexus with Yemeni *`ulamā'*, especially with the al-Ahdal family in Zabīd. Not only did he become the disciple of the *muftī* of Zabīd, Yahyā al-Ahdal and consecutively his maternal nephew and student, Ahmad al-Ahdal, but in later years he also enjoyed a respected career as a teacher in Zabīd, where his students included among others, `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Ahdal who was also the *muftī* and grandson of Yahyā al-Ahdal. Thus it is obvious apart from having a strong teacher-student nexus with the al-Ahdal family, al-Falimbānī also constitutes part of the intellectual scholarly network in Zabīd through his teaching career there.

From al-Falimbānī's list of known teachers, I also have extracted evidence that in 1160/1747 he was already studying in Mecca with one of the prominent Meccan

scholars, Sālim b. `Abd Allāh al-Basrī (d. 1160/1747). Sālim al-Basrī himself was the son of the renowned seventeenth century Meccan *muhaddith* `Abd Allāh al-Basrī, and like his father was also an authority on various Islamic religious disciplines especially in *Hadīth* narrations. Unlike the numerous Islamic religious sciences al-Falimbānī studied with Ahmad al-Ahdal mentioned earlier, he only studied two works with Sālim al-Basrī, namely *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, one of the six major canonical collections of *Hadīth*, and Ahmad al-Jārabardī's (d. 746/1345) *Sharh ash-Shāfiyah*, a commentary on a popular work on etymology *ash-Shāfiyah* by Ibn al-Hājib (d. 646/1248). (al-Fādānī 1981a, 1988d; al-Falimbānī 1987, 1988). This perhaps indicates that al-Falimbānī only studied with Sālim al-Basrī presumably in the last years of his life.

As I have already mentioned earlier, by examining references to the places and dates which al-Falimbānī usually provides when he began his works or completed them, we can extract some information on his intellectual life, travels and literary activities. Furthermore, the list of his teachers that he often mentions in these works usually gives us clear indication as to when he studied with them. For instance, from the date of completion of his first scholarly work, *Zahrāt al-Murīd* in Mecca in 1178/1765, not only we learn that he studied with the visiting Egyptian professor of al-Azhar, Ahmad b. `Abd al-Mun'im ad-Damanhūrī (1101-92/1690-1778), but he also mentioned some of his earlier teachers with whom he had studied prior to completing this work, such as `Atā' Allāh b. Ahmad al-Azharī al-Misrī al-Makkī and `Abd al-Ghanī Hilāl al-Makkī (d. 1212/1798). (al-Falimbānī 1912, n.d.a).

Though no record on `Atā' Allāh al-Mirī's date of birth is available from biographical dictionaries, this scholar was clearly born in Egypt and later after completing his education at al-Azhar migrated to Mecca, or as al-Kattānī (1932) describes, he became *naẓīl al-Haramayn* (a resident of Mecca and Medina), where he died after 1186/1772. Furthermore, though the year of his migration to Mecca is unknown to biographers, what we can deduce is that `Atā' Allāh must have migrated to Mecca prior to 1178/1765, as his *nisbah* was described by al-Falimbānī (1912) as "Shaykh `Atā' Allāh b. Ahmad al-Misrī al-Azharī *thumma* (then later) al-Makkī", thus he has already migrated to Mecca when al-Falimbānī wrote his work. Probably, he studied with `Atā' Allāh in Egypt before he migrated to Mecca as I have found further evidence that al-Falimbānī also studied in Egypt with some of its prominent scholars, such as Ahmad b. `Abd al-Fattāh al-Mujīrī al-Mullawī (1088-1182/1677-1767), Ahmad b. Hasan al-Khālidī al-Jawharī (1096-1182/1684-1768), Dāwūd b. Sulaymān al-Kharibtāwī (1080-1170/1669-1757), `Abd ar-Rahmān al-`Aydarūs (1135-93/1722-79) and Muhammad MurtaDā az-Zabīdī (1145-1205/1732-90). (A. al-Falimbānī, n.d.a; M. al-Falimbānī 1988; al-Fādānī 1981a, 1988d, 1983a, 1985a, 1983c).

It was probably while studying in Mecca that al-Falimbānī, together with other *Jāwī* compatriots, including Muhammad Arshad al-Banjārī, `Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bugīsī, and `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Batāwī also travelled to Egypt to study with its scholars. Though we do not have precise evidence on when such travel to Egypt may have happened, it would appear from the list of his Egyptian teachers with whom al-Falimbānī came in contact and the report of his travels from his traditional account, that he studied in Egypt. (al-Banjārī 1937; Abdullah 1996). This conclusion is in accord with al-Fādānī's report when he points out that al-Falimbānī received his instructions in Egypt from, among others, the two Shihābs: Ahmad al-Mullawī and Ahmad al-Jawharī (*wa-rawā `Abd as-Samad... bi-Misr `an `sh-Shihābayn, Ahmad b. `Abd al-Fattāh al-Mullawī wa-Ahmad b. Hasan al-Jawharī*). (al-Falimbānī 1988).

It has been generally assumed by modern scholars that `Abd as-Samadal-Falimbānī's scholarly travel and sojourn were confined to the Arabian Peninsula region where he travelled widely to study in Mecca, Medina, Jeddah, and at-Tā'if. However, careful examination of the sources would suggest that in addition to the already mentioned Zabīd, al-Falimbānī also travelled to Egypt and Syria studying with notable scholars from both Cairo and Damascus.

Based on the list of the Damascene scholars with whom al-Falimbānī came into contact, and al-Fādānī's report that he studied with them in Damascus, it is plausible that he must have taken the opportunity to travel northward to Syria through Palestine during his period of sojourn in Egypt. The strongest evidence that shows al-Falimbānī travelled to Damascus was related by al-Fādānī when he says, "*wa-rawā `Abd as-SamadayDan ... bi-Dimashq `an Muhammad b. Sālim as-Saffārīnī, wa-Ahmad b. `Ubayd al-`Attār*", thus pointing out he studied with them in Damascus. (al-Falimbānī, 1988). From various sources, I was able to trace another two Syrian teachers of al-Falimbānī in addition to Ahmad al-`Attār (1138-1218/1725-1803) and Muhammad as-Saffārīnī (1114-88/1702-74). They are Muhammad b. `Uthmān al-`Aqīlī (1163-1245/1749-1829) and `Umar b. `Abd al-Qādir al-Armanāzī (1105-48/1693-1735). (al-Fādānī 1981a, 1983a, 1988d; al-Falimbānī 1988). Thus, from the list of Syrian scholars with whom al-Falimbānī came in contact with, it further shows the intellectual connections that he had with Syrian scholars.

Furthermore, according to al-Banjārī (1937), al-Falimbānī was reported to have studied for thirty five years in *al-Haramayn*; thirty years in Mecca and five years in Medina. From the dates al-Falimbānī himself provides, we know that his first three works were completed in Mecca between 1178/1765 and 1181/1767, and his next dated works were completed between 1187/1773 and 1203/1789, in Mecca and at-Tā'if. Thus we can deduce that the five years al-Falimbānī studied in Medina must have been from 1181/1767 to 1186/1772, before his first return journey back to his home country. This assumption is further supported by al-Falimbānī's own works. Among his teachers in Medina were Muhammad b. Sulaymān al-Kurdī al-Madanī (1127-94/1715-80) who was the Shāfi'i *muftī* of Islamic jurisprudence in the City of the Prophet, and the highly venerated eighteenth century *Sūfī* master in Medina, Muhammad b. `Abd al-Karīm as-Sammān (1130-89/1717-75). Furthermore, by carefully examining al-Falimbānī's works, it is evident that he only studied with as-Sammān after 1181/1767, as none of his first three works mention as-Sammān, but give a clear indication that by that time he had not met him, and become his disciple. On the other hand, all his works which were written in 1187/1773 and afterwards never fail to mention his teacher as-Sammān whom he venerated highly and regarded as an exemplary '*walī qutb*' (pole in the mystical hierarchy of saints) of his time. (al-Falimbānī n.d.a).

In addition to the two renowned scholar of Medina in the eighteenth century, al-Falimbānī's Medinian teachers also include `Abd ar-Rahmān b. `Abd al-`Azīz al-`Umarī al-Maghribī, `Abd al-Ghanī b. Abī Bakr b. `Abd ar-Rahmān al-Qāsim better known as 'al-`Ālim as-Sūfī al-Hindī al-Madanī, and Siddīq b. `Umar Khān al-Madanī. (al-Falimbānī n.d.a). Though the latter may have been a teacher of al-Falimbānī as he relates that it was upon the instruction of as-Sammān that he studied and read several works with Siddīq al-Madanī, he was more of an esteemed colleague than a teacher to him. This evidently can be seen from their close relations. For instance, it was upon al-Falimbānī's request that Siddīq al-Madanī wrote for him his *Qatf Azhār al-Mawāhib ar-Rabbāniyyah*, a commentary on as-Sammān's poem, *an-Nafahat al-Qudsiyyah*, a commentary intended for his fellow Muslims in Palembang.

In his prologue, Siddiq al-Madanī (1973) writes: "be informed O my brethren, that I am a helpless and a weak servant. I was requested by a brother in the *Tarīqah*, the Gnostic of God, the divine (*ar-rabbānī*) our master Shaykh `Abd as-Samad al-Jāwī al-Falimbānī to write a commentary on this *al-`ayniyyah* poem known as *an-Nafahat al-Qudsiyyah* attributed to our above-mentioned teacher [as-Sammān] who is more known than 'a mountain crowned by light'. He had seen my other commentary on this poem, but it was in esoteric language (*al-Haqā'iq*). Thus, he instructed me to elucidate it in exoteric language (*az-Zāhir*) which can be understood by those who are not acquainted with the intricacies of knowledge (*ad-daqa'iq*). I complied with his request immediately turning to God for help to unbind its symbols".

In addition to this, according to al-Falimbānī (n.d.a), when he himself completed a treatise on *wahdat al-wujūd* based on the teachings that he received from as-Sammān, Siddiq al-Madanī was the first to read this work and later gave it the title *Zād al-Muttaqīn fī Tawhīd Rabb al-`Ālamīn*. Thus, both these occasions clearly reflect the close relations and mutual estimation between Siddiq al-Madanī and `Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī as fellow disciples of as-Sammān.

Apart from their close relations, Siddiq also acknowledged that al-Falimbānī was among the best students of as-Sammān. According to Siddiq (1973), the most esteemed among as-Sammān's students who benefited greatly from him, in his own terms, "*wa-kān min ajalli talāmidhatihi akhdhan wa-a`Zamuhum manāran*" was `Abd as-Samad al-Jāwī al-Falimbānī al-Makkī. It is quite clear from Siddiq's statement that `Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī had earned the most esteemed position among as-Sammān's disciples.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be observed that `Abd as-Samad al-Falimbānī was probably the most distinguished among the *Jāwī `ulamā'* in the eighteenth century, and by implication his crucial role in shaping the intellectual development of the Malay people and their culture of Islamic learning. It also highlighted his revered position among his peers, pupils and contemporaries, both *Jāwīs* and Arabs. Looking at the extensive connections al-Falimbānī had with Yemeni, Egyptian, Damascene, and the Arabian Peninsula *`ulamā'*, it is appropriate to say that al-Falimbānī was part of a crucial link in the nexus of 12th/18th century Muslim religious scholarship who disseminate their teachings further to the Malay world.

Endnotes

1. The transliteration of his *nisbah* "al-Falimbānī" is recorded in modern works with different spellings, namely al-Palimbānī, al-Palembānī, al-Filimbānī, al-Falembānī, al-Felimbānī, etc. This word is derived from the Arabicized form, in a similar way that Aceh is spelt as Ashī in Arabic, Padang as Fādān, Langkat as Lānkāt, Lampong as Lāmfūn, etc.
2. All people of the Malay race in Arabia are included under this name, *Jāwī* (plural *Jāwah* or *Jāwiyyīn*) and all lands populated by them are called inclusively *Bilād al-Jāwah*. See Hurgronje (1970), p. 215.
3. For further discussion on al-Falimbānī's pedigree and biographical account, see Ahmad (2009), pp. 63-95.
4. For further discussion on al-Falimbānī's teachers, see Ahmad (2009), pp. 96-177.

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